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occasion that the Vienna Library, according to Professor D. H. Müller, has acquired from Yemen a copy of R. Jonah ben Jannah's dictionary (JEWISH QUARTERLY REVIEW, III., p. 613). These communications could reach the Yemen Jews through either the medium of the *Alliance Israelite* in Paris, or from Jerusalem, where some Jews from Yemen are resident. But this ought to be done soon, or it may be too late, as was the case with the Bible MSS. in the Synagogue of Hamadan in Persia, where the old MSS. became the prey of the flames. Researches for MSS. ought to be made through the above-mentioned media in Persia, since the Jews produced a comparatively rich literature there, as can be seen from recent acquisitions in the British Museum. Only lately a Pentateuch copy, which was written in the ninth century at the latest, a century earlier than the so-called *Codex Babylonicus*, now in St. Petersburg, which is dated 916 A.D., was acquired there.

A. NEUBAUER.

The Canon of the Old Testament By Professor RYLE. London, 1892.

THE last two years have brought forward not less than three works dealing with the question of the formation of the Canon of the Old Testament. Two of them belong to Continental scholars, Professor Buhl in Leipzig, and Professor Wildeboer in Groningen, the former of whom may be said to be very accurate, whilst the latter, though very suggestive, has no great claims to exactness. In his citations from the Rabbinic literature in particular, Professor Wildeboer appears to us to rely too much on the works of his predecessors. Otherwise such a mis-translation as is given on page 53, note 2, or such an erroneous statement about the term *Kethubim Achronim* as is made on page 132, could never have occurred. The third, which will be the subject of this short notice, is by Professor Ryle, of Cambridge, and not only combines suggestiveness with exactness, but is also fuller in its information than either of the other mentioned works.

Professor Ryle's book is described on the title-page as an "Essay on the gradual growth and formation of the Hebrew Canon of Scripture." This gradual growth is best seen, according to the author from the tri-partite division of the Old Testament into Pentateuch, Prophets, and Hagiographa. But gradual growth does not only apply to these three groups at large, but also to every book of the twenty-four in particular which constitute the Old Testament, each book having, according to the modern school, a history of its own before it

was admitted into the Canon. And thus Professor Ryle's book, whilst giving us a history of the Canon of the Old Testament, offers at the same time many of the best-assured results of Bible criticism. This is put before the reader with an admirable clearness and lucidity in the first nine chapters of this book, in which the author not only treats of the said three groups, in which he perceives as many Canons, but also deals with each book separately, as well as with its antecedents before its admission into its respective Canon. But as we have already indicated, it is only the best-assured results which will be found in this book. For Professor Ryle is very careful not to permit mere conjectures "without the basis of any direct evidence" to play too great a part in his argument. Even such an interesting hypothesis as that which tries to account for the elevation of the Prophets to the rank of Holy Scripture (about 300 B.C.), on the ground that it was intended as something like a reaction against the Law, Professor Ryle only admits as an interesting conjecture, but not as a real explanation. Indeed, this would mean an ante-dating of Paulinistic tendencies by about four centuries before their appearance in history. And if conjectures were allowed, might not the champion of the Law maintain with just as much plausibility that the canonising of the Prophets was owing to the activity of the Scribes, who in their effort to establish an uninterrupted Rabbinical succession, if we may call it so, filled up the gap between the Mosaic times and their own by canonising a series of writings extending over all these blank ages, at the same time declaring their writers to be the bearers of that tradition or Oral Law, the possession of which they claimed for themselves. However, this is only a conjecture, without any basis in fact. But we are afraid that when Professor Ryle, in citing the above-mentioned hypothesis, speaks of "the spiritual sterility of the interpretation which the Jewish Scribes applied to the law," he also starts a supposition for which there is no evidence. For there is hardly a single line in the whole Hebrew literature which could, with any degree of certainty, pass as a specimen of the interpretation of the law applied by the scribes as early as 300 B.C.; but if they were to be judged by the standard of their later successors, the Rabbis, it will suffice to refer the reader to the Midrashim on Leviticus and Numbers, and it will easily be found that they drew, even from these most nomistic portions of the law, as many spiritual thoughts, and edifying lessons, as was possible to be derived without wholly rejecting the literal interpretation. Indeed it would appear to us that Professor Ryle is rather too severe on the Scribes and their successors; as, for instance, on page 176, where he says that "we should not anticipate from the

founders of the school of Rabbinic exegesis any favour to a more liberal treatment of the Canon." But this seems rather inconsistent with the author's own suggestion, on page 198, that "the acceptance of this book (Song of Songs) into the Canon possibly implies a date at which the allegorical interpretation—in other words, the influence of Haggadic teaching—had come into use"; considering that Haggadic teaching formed an essential part of the Rabbinic exegesis.

Of the remaining three chapters of Professor Ryle's book the tenth and the eleventh are devoted to the testimony of the early Christian Church and the Jewish Schools to the Canon, whilst the twelfth deals with the different arrangements of the books of the Old Testament. To appreciate rightly the labour and research involved in these chapters and to profit by them properly one ought to study them together with the five excursus with which the book concludes. There the student will find the necessary passages bearing on this question scattered over the Apocrypha, Philo, Josephus, as well as over the whole of the early Christian and Rabbinic literature. In Excursus A, dealing with the origin of the Canon according to tradition, the author has even taken the trouble to collect all the references as well as the views of the different schools relating to the question of the date and existence of the men of the Great Synagogue, whilst in Excursus B. he has given us a full and most accurate translation after a critical text of the well-known passage in *Baba Bathra*. Thus the student will find in this book an excellent *résumé* of almost all the various opinions brought to bear on the subject, both by ancient and modern authors, but treated with an independence and critical insight on the one hand and a strong aversion to every hazardous theory on the other hand, which make the information the learned author gives us so useful and valuable.

S. SCHECHTER.
